

By: Representatives Arnold, Hughes

To: Education;
Appropriations

HOUSE BILL NO. 1141

1 AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 37-21-7, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO
2 INCREASE THE MINIMUM SALARY FOR ASSISTANT TEACHERS AND TO DELETE
3 OUTDATED STATUTORY LANGUAGE; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

5 **SECTION 1.** Section 37-21-7, Mississippi Code of 1972, is
6 amended as follows:

7 37-21-7. (1) This section shall be referred to as the
8 "Mississippi Elementary Schools Assistant Teacher Program," the
9 purpose of which shall be to provide an early childhood education
10 program that assists in the instruction of basic skills. The
11 State Board of Education is authorized, empowered and directed to
12 implement a statewide system of assistant teachers in kindergarten
13 classes and in the first, second and third grades. The assistant
14 teacher shall assist pupils in actual instruction under the strict
15 supervision of a licensed teacher.

16 (2) (a) Except as otherwise authorized under subsection
17 (7), each school district shall employ the total number of
18 assistant teachers funded under subsection (6) of this section.



19 The superintendent of each district shall assign the assistant
20 teachers to the kindergarten, first-, second- and third-grade
21 classes in the district in a manner that will promote the maximum
22 efficiency, as determined by the superintendent, in the
23 instruction of skills such as verbal and linguistic skills,
24 logical and mathematical skills, and social skills.

25 (b) If a licensed teacher to whom an assistant teacher
26 has been assigned is required to be absent from the classroom, the
27 assistant teacher may assume responsibility for the classroom in
28 lieu of a substitute teacher. However, no assistant teacher shall
29 assume sole responsibility of the classroom for more than three
30 (3) consecutive school days. Further, in no event shall any
31 assistant teacher be assigned to serve as a substitute teacher for
32 any teacher other than the licensed teacher to whom that assistant
33 teacher has been assigned.

34 (3) Assistant teachers shall have, at a minimum, a high
35 school diploma or a High School Equivalency Diploma equivalent,
36 and shall show demonstratable proficiency in reading and writing
37 skills. The State Department of Education shall develop a testing
38 procedure for assistant teacher applicants to be used in all
39 school districts in the state.

40 (4) (a) In order to receive funding, each school district
41 shall:



(i) Submit a plan on the implementation of a reading improvement program to the State Department of Education; and

(ii) Develop a plan of educational accountability and assessment of performance, including pretests and posttests, for reading in Grades 1 through 6.

(b) Additionally, each school district shall:

(i) Provide annually a mandatory preservice orientation session, using an existing in-school service day, for administrators and teachers on the effective use of assistant teachers as part of a team in the classroom setting and on the role of assistant teachers, with emphasis on program goals;

(ii) Hold periodic workshops for administrators and teachers on the effective use and supervision of assistant teachers;

(iii) Provide training annually on specific instructional skills for assistant teachers;

(iv) Annually evaluate their program in accordance with their educational accountability and assessment of performance plan; and

(v) Designate the necessary personnel to supervise and report on their program.

(5) The State Department of Education shall:

(a) Develop and assist in the implementation of a statewide uniform training module, subject to the availability of



funds specifically appropriated therefor by the Legislature, which shall be used in all school districts for training administrators, teachers and assistant teachers. The module shall provide for the consolidated training of each assistant teacher and teacher to whom the assistant teacher is assigned, working together as a team, and shall require further periodic training for administrators, teachers and assistant teachers regarding the role of assistant teachers;

(b) Annually evaluate the program on the district and state level. Subject to the availability of funds specifically appropriated therefor by the Legislature, the department shall develop: (i) uniform evaluation reports, to be performed by the principal or assistant principal, to collect data for the annual overall program evaluation conducted by the department; or (ii) a program evaluation model that, at a minimum, addresses process evaluation; and

(c) Promulgate rules, regulations and such other standards deemed necessary to effectuate the purposes of this section. Noncompliance with the provisions of this section and any rules, regulations or standards adopted by the department may result in a violation of compulsory accreditation standards as established by the State Board of Education and the Commission on School Accreditation.

(6) In addition to other funds allotted under the * * * Adequate Education Program, each school district shall be allotted



sufficient funding for the purpose of employing assistant teachers. No assistant teacher shall be paid less than the amount he or she received in the prior school year. No school district shall receive any funds under this section for any school year during which the aggregate amount of the local contribution to the salaries of assistant teachers by the district shall have been reduced below such amount for the previous year.

For the * * * 2019-2020 school year and school years thereafter, the minimum salary for assistant teachers shall be * * * Fourteen Thousand Five Hundred Dollars (\$14,500.00).

* * * The assistant teachers shall not be restricted to working only in the grades for which the funds were allotted, but may be assigned to other classes as provided in subsection (2)(a) of this section.

(7) (a) As an alternative to employing assistant teachers, any school district may use the allotment provided under subsection (6) of this section for the purpose of employing licensed teachers for kindergarten, first-, second- and third-grade classes; however, no school district shall be authorized to use the allotment for assistant teachers for the purpose of employing licensed teachers unless the district has established that the employment of licensed teachers using such funds will reduce the teacher:student ratio in the kindergarten, first-, second- and third-grade classes. All state funds for



assistant teachers shall be applied to reducing teacher:student
ratio in Grades K-3.

It is the intent of the Legislature that no school district
shall dismiss any assistant teacher for the purpose of using the
assistant teacher allotment to employ licensed teachers. School
districts may rely only upon normal attrition to reduce the number
of assistant teachers employed in that district.

(b) Districts meeting the highest levels of
accreditation standards, as defined by the State Board of
Education, shall be exempted from the provisions of subsection (4)
of this section.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect and be in force from
and after July 1, 2019.

